

Appl. No. 09/621,234
Amdt. Dated February 23, 2005

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 15, 16 and 17 have been amended. Claim 23 is new. Claims 1-14 and 18 remain as previously presented. Claims 1-18 and 23 are pending.

Claim 15, 16 and 17, have been amended to replace the word header with the words solid body, as supported by, or example, column 22, line 36, of the original patent. Claim 15 is further amended to replace the reference to treating a multicomponent liquid substrate with a reference to withdrawing permeate from a liquid substrate, as supported by, for example, column 3, lines 36-39 of the original patent. Claim 15 is further amended to replace the words cylindrical skein with a reference to an assembly having, among other things, generally cylindrical solid bodies as supported by, for example, Figures 6-9 and the related text of the original patent. Claim 15 is further amended to use the word membrane consistently in place of the word fiber as supported by claim 15 before this amendment. Claim 15 is further amended to replace the reference to a flexible support means with a reference to the solid bodies comprising a potting material and to at least a portion of the membranes being spaced apart from adjacent membranes by the potting material to a center to center distance in the range from 1.2 to 5 times the outside diameter of the fibers. This amendment is supported by, for example, column 7, lines 28-31, of the original patent. Claim 15 is further amended to state that the membranes are sealingly secured in the solid bodies so as to prevent the substrate from contaminating the permeate. This amendment is supported by, for example, column 7, lines 38-40 of the original patent. Claim 15 is further amended to state that lumens of the membranes are in fluid communication a permeate collection means connected to one of the solid bodies and immersible in the substrate or to a pair of permeate collection means connected one to each of the solid bodies and both immersible in the substrate. This amendment is supported by Figures 2, 3 and 6-11 of the original patent and the related text. Claim 15 is further amended to replace former part (d) with a reference to aeration means having through-passages with openings, distributed both radially and circumferentially between the membranes for discharging air directly into the substrate near the lower solid body to provide a column of bubbles

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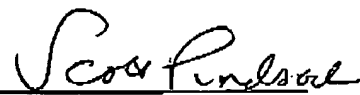
rising from near lower ends of the membranes. This amendment is supported by Figures 2, 3 and 6-11 of the original patent and the related text.

New claim 23 depends on claim 15 and states that the aeration means comprises an air blower and a passageway between the air blower and the openings sealed so as to prevent the substrate from entering the passageway other than through the openings. This amendment is supported by Figures 2, 3 and 6-11 of the original patent and the related text.

The Applicant submits that the current amendments are supported by the original patent and that the claims are allowable.

Respectfully submitted,

HENSHAW et al.

By 
Scott R. Pundsack
Reg. No. 47,330
Tel: (416) 957-1698